

INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

GENTLEMEN :—

A traveller about to commence a long and tedious journey, which may tax his strength, his patience, and his endurance, while it will unfold to him new scenes of beauty, and open new sources of delight, is naturally inclined to inquire respecting the peculiarities of the route he is about to travel. He will desire to know at least its more prominent features, its mountains, rivers, and valleys, and something, perhaps, of the people he will be likely to meet. Like him we are about to enter upon a course of systematic observation and inquiry, and a brief glance at some of the more prominent topics to be embraced in our field of study, will form a not inappropriate theme for our evening's introduction.

The College announcement informs you that a course of instruction upon the Institutes of Homœopathy, Pathology, and the Practice of Medicine has been committed to my hands.

You may easily imagine that, in surveying the important duties thus intrusted to my charge, and reflecting upon the inevitable consequences which must result from their well or ill performance, both to you as individuals, to this institution, to our entire school of medicine, as well as to our common humanity, we tremble with apprehension and involuntarily shrink from the discharge of those duties which the partiality of the Managers of this Institution have imposed upon us. Nothing, you may be assured, but a profound conviction of the truth of those great and peculiar principles which form the basis of our medical faith, and of the deep importance to our entire race of their diffusion and acceptance, could have induced us to assume a position so important and so responsible.

The Institutes of Homœopathy involve, principally, our great law of cure, and its application. To explain that law, to enforce

and illustrate it, so as to place its profitable application within the reach of the intelligent student, will be one of the principal duties of my chair.

It is happy for us, gentlemen, and happy for mankind, that there is a law regulating the application of medicines in disease. That amid the multiplicity of diseases to which men are subject, and the numberless remedial agents which surround us, we are not left to conjecture or even to blind empiricism, as to what is appropriate, and what will cure. But that the benevolent Author of all good has stamped upon all morbid phenomenon, through their reflection upon the material world around us, a law for their government and control.

To this law, as to a high and lofty principle, all-pervading, and all-overshadowing in the domain of therapeutics, we can appeal with a confident expectation that the ground will not yield beneath our feet, nor its application deceive our reasonable expectation.

It has received the sanction of experience, and may be regarded as a settled and incontrovertible axiom. It has now been tested for more than fifty years, in almost every variety of disease, in every climate and country, and under almost every conceivable variety of form and circumstance, and yet it has rarely or never failed to justify the reasonable expectations of those who have employed it. To say it has never failed to cure, would be to aver that an art has no limit for its application. But wherever it has been possible for medicine to aid, relieve, or cure, medicine administered according to this principle has been effective. It has formed the ready resource of the physician amid the most fatal and destructive epidemics which have ever wasted the earth, and has proved the simple talisman, whose touch has imparted health and life. It has exercised an influence upon the opinions and practice of the medical world, which no medical doctrine has ever exercised before, and while its enemies have been denouncing it with bitter hostility, it has been insensibly moulding their own opinions and practice to its own image and nature, rendering them, while openly its enemies and opponents, yet secretly and practically its apologists and practitioners. It has engraved a name and record, for our entire medical faith, in the imperishable annals of our race, more enduring than the loftiest monument erected to martial deeds, and has imparted to its followers a degree of confi-

dence and security amid pestilence and disease, never possessed by physicians before. It has modified, smoothed, and softened the entire medical practice of the times, and laid our common humanity under lasting obligations for the abolition of some of the most barbarous practices, and destructive expedients and remedies, which ever cursed our race. It has given to the entire system of medicine, a character of certainty and scientific unity, which it never possessed before, and rendered it a study worthy of the most devoted energies of the human intellect, and the heartiest labors of the philanthropist.

This element of certainty and positiveness, which medicine has now attained in a degree so high, as to approximate the character of the demonstrative sciences, is one of the chief ingredients of its value. In a matter so important as that of health and life, uncertainty in the means employed for our recovery is our most fatal enemy. It palsies effort, imparts indecision to every movement, and marks every step with that vacillation and hesitancy which are the sure precursors of defeat. But assure the physician that the law upon which he bases the application of his curatives, is fixed and immutable, and that, guided by it, his medicines will reach the morbid condition with unerring precision, and it imparts a cheerful confidence to his efforts, in the highest degree beneficial to himself and patient. The very step and manner of the man is different. There is hope in his countenance, light in his eye, and the very atmosphere around him is changed. This much is settled: medicines cure according to the great central axiom, *similia similibus curantur*. But let no one suppose that because the annunciation of this great law is simple, its application is also simple. The law of gravitation is simple, and yet its application to the movements of the heavenly bodies is not without its difficulties, nor is it easy for every man to become an astronomer.

It has been, indeed, objected to our great law of cure, that if it were true and applicable, it would tend to degrade the physician, and destroy the scientific character of medicine; as the practitioner being only obliged to institute a comparison between the symptoms of a disease and a medicine, in order to cure, the exercise of reason and judgment as to causes, morbid processes, and results, would be unnecessary. But may it not well be doubted, whether in the minds of those who make such an objection, some obscurity does

not exist as to that in which science consists? And may we not doubt whether they have not mistaken mysticism and antiquated obscurity for science, on the one hand, and confounded simplicity and scientific precision, with ignorance on the other.

But while the principle of cure in our school of medicine is settled, and there is but little dissent from either its truth or universality, there is no little discussion and variety of practice with regard to the best method of its application. Amid this variety of opinion and practice, it will fall among the duties connected with our chair, to examine, without bigotry or obstinacy, and yet by allowing to others the highest freedom enjoyed by ourselves, the contending claims of these various methods, and to reconcile, as far as possible, the varied and yet satisfactory results arising from its diverse exhibition, and to show, as far as practicable, the best mode of its application, under different circumstances.

In order to settle this subject in the most satisfactory manner, we shall be obliged to appeal to the authority of the most experienced and successful of our school, and often, especially, to the great founder of our system, and those of his immediate friends and followers, who seem most to have inherited his spirit and success.

It was fortunate for Homœopathy that Samuel Hahnemann was its founder. It was doubly fortunate that he was spared so long to perform the Herculean and peculiar labors incident to the establishment of such a science, and to demonstrate, by his own matchless skill and success in the cure of the sick, the truth and efficiency of his great discoveries. A man of less patience and perseverance would have been appalled at the immense labors to be performed, and disheartened at the slow progress of so glorious a truth. One of less penetration and sagacity would have failed to discover the delicate relationship of truths, often apparently so remotely allied. One of less forensic power and vigor would have been overwhelmed beneath the arguments and ridicule heaped, by able antagonists, upon a system so novel, so contrary to previous usage, and so open to popular objections.

To his writings we may appeal upon almost every point in connexion with this discussion, as to ultimate authority. What he has written may be received with confidence, as the result of larger experience and riper judgment than commonly falls to the lot of

men. And, yet, it must be understood that Hahnemann has not recorded all that is now known in reference to the law of cure and its application.

Owing to circumstances deeply to be regretted, Hahnemann offered to the world but little of the much he wrote during the last few years of his life. These circumstances have never been fully disclosed, but are understood to have been an unwillingness to enter the arena of controversy with some who owed all their professional standing to him, and whose lips and pen, veneration and gratitude should have for ever sealed, as against him. Could the voluminous observations made by him during that period of his life be given to the world, we should doubtless have a modification, at least of some of the views contained in his *Organon*. Not in the way of contradiction—far from it; but rather in the way of extension and explanation; for we may believe that the great central axiom of our system, around which all lesser truths in Therapeutics revolve as around a common centre, and from which they receive their light and vitality, is even more extensively applicable than its illustrious discoverer has announced.

To the *Organon* we shall have frequent occasion to refer in the course of our lectures, as containing the most satisfactory explanation of the great principles of the system, and the most careful and conscientious observations of many phenomena occurring in the course of the treatment of disease, and as being on the whole the most complete and elaborate exposition of our great principle and its application.

While in the *Organon* we have the announcement and explanation of the principle of Homœopathy, we have in the chronic diseases the exhibition of a pathological truth of almost boundless importance, and referring to it a therapeutic doctrine equally useful and important.

It is unnecessary now to enter into a discussion as to the truth of these discoveries, or to show their bearing and influence upon the great field before us; it is sufficient to say that they have received the abundant sanction and confirmation of experience, and are regarded as established truths, a correct apprehension of which is indispensable to the success of the practitioner.

Although Hahnemann has written more than any other man upon these subjects, and brought to their investigation a wider

range of experience and perhaps riper judgment than his successors, yet we are deeply indebted to some others who have labored long and well in this field. Jahr, Hartman, Hering, not to mention numerous cotemporaries, have each played well their respective parts, and afforded good service in elucidating, extending and applying the great principles upon which our structure is based, and each deserve our lasting remembrance and gratitude for their contributions and labors. Nor is it to be supposed that this field is exhausted. As the multitude of observers increases, and the old landmarks become more fixed and established, new truths and new applications of old ones are continually being reported, leaving us to infer that this field is yet rich and hopeful, and that in it each of you may yet achieve fresh conquests and gather new laurels.

In a science so young and fresh as that of Homœopathy, where there is so much that is new—especially in the application of our principles—it would not be surprising if much that is crude and undigested should from time to time find its way into our literature and for a period gain currency and credit. It is easy to see that the temptation, from a variety of reasons, is very great to come before the public as authors and to gain credit by assuming the popular side. Hence views are often put forth, imperfect and immature, which would either never have seen the light, or been essentially modified, had their authors patiently waited for a more enlarged experience and mature judgment. The wanderer, long groping his way in darkness, has caught a straggling ray of Homœopathic truth, and in its light objects present themselves in shapes and colors so new and wonderful, that, overjoyed, he hastens in his new-born zeal to give the world the benefit of his discoveries, while as yet he sees only men as trees walking.

The example of Hahnemann, in this respect, is worthy of imitation. Twenty years elapsed from the time of his discovery of the principle of Homœopathy, before the *Organon*, containing its elucidation, was given to the world. And these were twenty years of constant toil, labor, observation, and experiment upon this subject; and yet another twenty of equal toil and labor and even more extended observation elapsed before his great work on *Chronic Diseases* was published. Thus patient was he; thus careful that the good seed sown might have time to germinate, and thus careful

that the truths he announced should have the signet of repeated trial and demonstration.

The literature of our school in this country is respectable. Most of the works emanating from the American press, are translations and compilations of standard European authors, and they usually compare favorably with the original productions. Sometimes a man announces himself in a manner so barefaced as to leave the intelligent reader at no loss as to his intention and object; but such instances are comparatively rare. The work of sifting will go on, and but little harm will be done by the publication of even trashy literature, provided those who use such works are properly instructed in the fundamental principles of our system—especially so, as we hold that but little injury is inflicted by reading even meagre, defective, or bad books on Homœopathy, as some truth is doubtless contained in each; and he who would become the successful reaper must not merely cast his seed in the one rich field, but rather “sow beside all waters.” We are to collect, then sift, winnow out, arrange, and then employ that portion of truth most appropriate and best fitted to our use.

The English Homœopathic literature often savors of the pill-box. There, as well as in some parts of Europe, the attempt has been made to graft Homœopathy upon old school pathology; to bend it, shape it, and make it conform to pathological notions and ideas with which it has but little in common. Fortunately, our science has survived that peril. They begin to realize that there are more appropriate doses than crude tinctures, and decimal triturations; and that Hahnemann’s discoveries and doctrines are something more tangible than German mysticisms and transcendental abstractions.

Yet our English colleagues are attractive men, perfectly at home in all the usual routine of medical literature; and entirely familiar with all the new discoveries and improvements in medical science, and we may ere long expect decided assistance from their contributions and labors.

Amid the variety of observation and practice which may from time to time meet your eye, your safety will be found, next to a thorough understanding of our fundamental principles, in a correct habit of observation. This is at all times an essential element of success with the physician, and especially so in our school of medicine, and is an indispensable requisite for professional standing

and preferment. Every hour you are called upon for the exercise of this faculty, and every day it is the only guide which will lead you safely through the labyrinth of doubt and perplexity. Without it truth may remain long concealed, or so clouded and obscured as to be worthless to you; precious gems of comfort and consolation for your patients may be trodden beneath your feet; and unless it is cultivated you will remain in that condition of contemptible mediocrity in which no man should rest. If you learn rightly to observe, we are persuaded that the application of our principles will always be safe in your hands, for observation will lead you to their proper employment.

Some have affected gravely to doubt whether it is possible to teach, successfully, the principles and practice of Homœopathy by lectures. They hold that there is so much in it to be acquired from observation, from seeing the practice of others, and practical experiment ourselves, that it must be difficult, if not impossible to impart a competent knowledge of it by oral instruction. Without denying that there is some force in the observation, we would reply, that, if there are tangible truths in this science, as undoubtedly there are, it cannot be an impossibility to impart to others a knowledge of those truths, and although the subject is by no means free from difficulties, yet we believe they are not insuperable, and that the apprehension has its foundation, at least to some extent, in a vague and cloudy conception as to what those truths are. But on the other hand, we are free to affirm, that although the subject has its difficulties, yet we believe the unwritten history of our science, and its teachings, is of no less importance than the written; and without oral instruction and example from some who do know, no man, however studious or attentive, can ever become an adept in its practice. The question then is merely, whether this oral instruction shall assume the form of stated systematic lectures, or the desultory conversation of teacher and pupil. Besides, it is intended to accompany the lectures with stated clinical instructions, in which every practical point will be illustrated and applied.

Another important branch committed to our charge, closely related to the previous one, and equally important, is Pathology.

We are to understand this term in its widest sense, as being not only an account of the morbid changes occurring in the diseased subject, and demonstrable by the knife of the surgeon in the cadaver, but as involving the entire history of disease, with all its

antecedents, manifestations, changes, and results. It includes, in short, the natural history of disease.

While Physiology has to do with the functions of the living body, and the part the several organs play in the economy of the healthy, Pathology has to do with the same body in a diseased or abnormal condition. As it is interesting to the intelligent mind to study the functions of the living body when in health, it is not less so to study them when in disordered action and struggling under the influence of some morbid agent. We shall see that the laws which govern the beautiful harmony of its movements, in a state of health, are not more definite and positive than they are in disease.

In the one case, we have them perfectly controlling the various functions of the system, and preserving the harmony of its motions, in order to subserve the higher purposes of our existence; and in the other, we witness a struggle, a mighty contest going on, the vital force seeking to free itself from some inimical agency, and the body often rapidly wasting under the excessive labor and excitement of the effort.

It becomes our duty, as the ministers of nature, to study these varied and almost endlessly diversified movements. If we would afford intelligent assistance, and offer a sacrifice worthy of ourselves, and of the occasion, we must be perfectly familiar with the entire subject. We must know what changes are occurring in the diseased body before us, we must know the symptoms by which such changes are indicated, and the farther results that are likely to ensue. At a single view we must take in the entire phenomena of diseased action, and be able, from the history of the case, and the symptoms before us, to form an intelligent judgment as to the real condition of our patient, his danger and its sources, and the probable results of his case.

Nothing affords a more ready access to the confidence of our patient, than being able to give him a natural and life-like, because truthful portrait of his case. He at once conceives that you understand his case, and he gives you fully that confidence which is in the highest degree important as an element of your success, and that remains a part of your capital until forfeited or lost.

In acquiring a knowledge of Pathology, nothing that has a proper bearing upon the subject is to be omitted. Whatever assistance is afforded by chemical analysis or microscopic examinations of the

various secretions or portions of the human body, is to be turned to account. All the light which Percussion and Auscultation can throw upon the morbid changes occurring within the chest, and the phenomena by which they are accompanied, is to be carefully consulted and employed, and in short, no means are to be neglected which may tend to make us familiar with the natural history of disease. For acquiring this knowledge we have peculiar facilities. We see disease, under our mild system of treatment, much more naturally than do our brethren of the old school. We do not often see our patient driven hither and thither by excessive doses of prostrating drugs, now exhausted from the action of a cathartic, and then from an emetic, and the phenomenon of disease always disguised and modified from the effects of the treatment, so that often the physician finds it impossible to conclude whether the heterogeneous medley before him is the result of medicinal or morbid action. Hence we ought to be better diagnosticians than they are.

But yet, notwithstanding our facilities, we fear that this branch has been too much neglected by Homœopathic physicians. Looking at the external manifestations, and constantly comparing these with the records of our *Materia Medica*, in order to cure, we are inclined to overlook the accessory advantages to be derived from this source. Our *Materia Medica* being so extensive and minute, and requiring for its just and profitable employment, so large a portion of our attention and study, we are apt to undervalue the less useful, though perhaps no less important branch under consideration.

We urge you to acquire a competent knowledge of the use of the stethoscope, and the aids afforded from chemical analysis and other assistance to be derived from science in this direction, not because with these things you can cure, but because they form a part of medical education, and impart knowledge of your patient and general science, of which you cannot afford to be ignorant. It is quite true that no man ever cured a diseased lung by the use of the stethoscope, nor a diseased kidney by an analysis of its secretion, but these things have imparted to the practitioner a clearer knowledge of the morbid changes which he is called on to treat, and often enable him to give a more intelligent and satisfactory diagnosis and prognosis of the condition of his patient, than he

could otherwise have done. Besides we may believe that our researches in this direction have not yet afforded us all the assistance of which they are capable, and it is reasonable to hope, that ere long, the key will be discovered by which we shall be enabled to direct certain classes of our medicaments to these material morbid changes.

But while this may be indulged as a reasonable expectation of the future, we would take occasion to warn you against the now, in some quarters, rather fashionable doctrine, that these morbid changes, demonstrated to the eye by the scalpel, are the most important symptoms to which we can apply our similia, and that the less prominent changes in sensation and function, are of comparative insignificance. Such is by no means the case. Our *Materia Medica* is rich in symptoms occurring in the sensational and functional sphere, while it is poor in the record of morbid material alterations. And in this it is true to nature. The medicine which will afford relief from its similia to the symptoms of the sensational sphere, be those sensations ever so trifling, will effect important modifications and ameliorations in the morbid condition which may have immediately preceded it. And we should always, also, bear in mind that before every material alteration there are always important changes in the vital forces themselves, and that such material alterations are but the result of their abnormal action. Hence it is that symptoms, often so unimportant or so trifling, have so important a bearing in the selection of a remedy,—a circumstance upon which you may often have occasion to reflect.

The last branch of our subject is the Practice of Medicine. While the Institutes of Homœopathy afford us the principles on which to apply our curatives, and Pathology supplies us with the history and results of morbid action, the Practice of Medicine is to make us familiar with the application of our principles to the morbid condition before us. We are to become familiar with the details of the sick-room, the appearance, condition, and wants of our patients, in short, with the minutia of every-day practice.

We have not the vanity to suppose, that by such a course of instruction merely, however prolonged or attentively studied, you will become skilful physicians, perfectly competent to guide the storm-tossed bark of human life through all the perils of disease; but we do suppose that you may thus, to a good extent, become

acquainted with the route you are to travel, the dangers that beset you, and the rocks on which you are liable to be wrecked. We suppose that you may thus lay the foundation upon which you may afterwards build a successful and profitable medical career, alike honorable to yourselves, and useful to the world. You will thus be in a condition to go out and study our common humanity to advantage and profit. You will compare it as it exhibits itself to you on the sick-bed, with what you have seen, read, and been told of it elsewhere, and may thus arrive at just and accurate conclusions. But this is a matter which you will accomplish for yourselves, and mostly after you leave these halls. Here you take the initiative. Here you learn to observe and to compare, in order to form a proper estimate of the objects afterwards to demand your attention. In your future course you are to acquire those habits of careful investigation, prompt apprehension, and readiness of resource which mark the skilful practitioner. And this art of medicine you are to acquire, from hearing the subject often discussed, seeing others do it, and doing it yourselves, until from repeated practice you become the finished workman. This is mostly to be the work of your own hands. We can direct you in the way, instruct you in the principles, and some of the details, but the main body of the work is to be the result of your own labor, patient observation and toil.

Such is a brief sketch of the course we have marked out for ourselves during this session, and in its execution we shall be under the necessity of asking your kind indulgence, and your charity for the imperfect manner in which it may be performed.

From the limited period which has elapsed since we accepted this chair, and the brief and slender opportunity afforded us for preparation, we fear that we shall not be able to do the subject or ourselves justice; but still, with a heart full of zeal, and a mind impressed with the importance of the work committed to our hands, we shall give you what we have. It has been said that one good listener is worth two story-tellers. If this be so, and there is truth in the remark, your kind attention and patient consideration may help the case much.

The profession you have chosen, gentlemen, is a noble one. Held in high esteem among honorable men, worthy of yourselves, and worthy of the loftiest aspirations of your minds. And it is

destined to stand in yet higher estimation among men. We have sometimes wondered how past medicine, in its helplessness and imbecility, has sustained itself in public estimation, or even preserved itself from contempt. Yet such has been the fact, doubtless owing to the number of eminent and worthy men engaged in its practice. And now that the physician has a key with which to unlock the light-giving stores of nature, we may reasonably expect that the practitioner, in proportion to his facilities for good, will, with the profession at large, be constantly rising in the good opinion of those around him.

You have seen an organist seat himself before a full-keyed and melodious instrument, and your soul has been entranced as his hands ran over those varied and almost endless keys, as you heard by turns, the march of armies upon the beach, the *Te Deum* of victory, and the hymn of praise and thanksgiving, and your soul was filled with wonder and delight at the skill of the performer; well, thus you may seat yourself before that wonderful instrument, the human body, and laying your hands upon our three hundred proved remedies, as one by one you touch those wonderful keys, and wake those life-giving energies of nature, then shall arise a hymn of praise to Almighty God, more acceptable, and more captivating than the loftiest strain of hymned melody.

You are to be the ministers of nature: seek to offer no unworthy or profane sacrifice upon her altar, but consecrate the gift with your labor, your careful acquisition, your toil, and even your prayers, that it may be an acceptable sacrifice, without spot or blemish. You are to be permitted to worship at the holiest shrine of nature, to even draw aside the veil which covers our common humanity, and stand within the holy of holies. You are to witness what profane eyes should never gaze upon, and unhallowed hands never touch. See that your hands are unsoiled and your eyes pure. So shall you, as you go about to do good to the image of your Maker on earth, offer continually the sacrifice of acceptable service, and partake of the blessedness and spirit of Him who healed the sick, cast out the devil, and cleansed the leper. And in doing this you employ no angry, no violent, no destroying spirit. Not by Beelzebub do you cast out devils, but by ministrations as kind as the angel of mercy, gentle as the dews of heaven, and perfect as the footsteps of love.

In the course of your professional career, you will not only walk about among these holy mysteries, but you will come often as a friend within the sanctuary of the domestic hearth, be intrusted with the most profound secrets of the human heart, witness those holy gushings of soul in affliction, which the world should never see, and hear that to which the world should never listen. O let me conjure you to begin to cultivate, even now, those habits of thought, and those graces of character, which shall make you a becoming witness and depositary of mysteries so holy, secrets so sacred.

Thus may you perform well your part, and consolation as sweet and as abiding as ever was pressed to the lips of mortal shall be yours. The rich will reward you bountifully. The poor will offer you all they have to give, the offering of a grateful heart; and there shall abide within you the rich consolation of having faithfully and acceptably served your generation.